

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2009

Present:

Councillor Cox - In the Chair
Councillors Ali, Carmody, Eakins

Officers Present:

Sue Brookes, Deputy Principal Youth Officer, Children's Services
Carolyn Whewell, Scrutiny Support Officer
Sarah Larchin, Public Health Development Advisor, Healthy Schools Programme, NHS Manchester
Bhavna Kotecha, Youth Worker, Children's Services

Also present:

Nicole, Connor and Joshua – young people representatives at the EU summit

ESG/09/12 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Ankers and Mrs Reid.

ESG/09/13 Minutes

Decision:

The subgroup agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2009 as a correct record.

ESG/09/14 Matters Arising

The subgroup received updates on a number of issues from the last meeting:

ESG/09/08 – Manchester Young People's Council – They Deputy Principal Youth informed members that it had been agreed to establish a Manchester Young People's Council based on second option arising from the Save the Children consultation. There would be an informal Central Youth Forum, which would be supported by the District Youth Forum and representatives from special interest and voluntary groups.

ESG/09/09 – Action Points – The Care to Change Council was now up and running. The Executive member of Children's Services had attended the launch in October. The Care to Change Council would also contribute to the Manchester Young People's Council once this had been established.

The subgroup discussed how the Council could progress the subgroup recommendation of offering shadowing opportunities for young people. A member suggested that some young people should be invited to a meeting of Full Council, which would be followed by an afternoon of workshops giving young people the opportunity to experience examples of the everyday work of Councillors. The young people indicated that this would be better taking place in the school holidays so they would not be taken out of school.

ESG/09/10 – Perception of Young People in the Media – The subgroup had discussed how young people were perceived in the media at its last meeting. The Chair informed members that this had been selected as the theme of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee engagement meeting in February 2010.

ESG/09/15 School Council Update

The Subgroup received an oral report from the Public Health Development Advisor, NHS Manchester on her role in working with School Councils. She informed members that the role formed part of the Healthy Schools Initiative, which focused on four areas of work – along four areas of work: emotional health and well-being, physical activity, health education and healthy eating. Each member of the Healthy Schools Initiative team had a specialist theme running through each of the areas of work with hers being to work with young people to ensure participation in decision making.

She advised members that there was some good practice in Manchester in terms of ensuring pupils were involved in decision making, but some schools needed more support to establish school councils. Some good practice had been identified, particularly in primary schools where young people had said that they felt involved. She added that there was a network for staff and pupils to come together and talk about common issues, share best practice and to improve communication. The networks had been quite successful so far with over 80 young people from across Manchester attending. Part of her role was to offer training and development to help young people represent their views and to advise schools about how to consult with pupils.

Members asked about the structure of school councils and the effectiveness of different structures. The Public Health Development Advisor, NHS Manchester said that there were a range of structures across schools with representatives from all ages. Some schools had representatives from each class and some nominated representatives from the year group. There was a good spread of primary, secondary and faith schools with school councils.

The subgroup discussed the measures that could be taken to encourage schools to be more proactive in developing school councils. The Public Health Development Advisor, NHS Manchester advised that school governors and staff were supportive, but staff in schools where there was no school council had stated that it was a low priority. Members noted that there was a requirement for schools to demonstrate pupil participation in Ofsted inspections so it was in their interests to be able to demonstrate this. There was a clear difference between schools in the north and the

south of the City in terms of pupil participation. It was difficult to cover all schools across the city, but members of the subgroup were invited to inform the Public Health Development Advisor of any schools that needed support to develop pupil participation.

The subgroup explored emotional well-being in schools and the support offered to young people to help them tackle problems. The Public Health Development Advisor informed members that there were support networks available for young people through the roles of form tutors, school nurses, teachers and external partners such as SEALs, Connexions and 42nd Street.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. To thank the public health development advisor for her report.

ESG/09/16 The Future Treaty Document from the European Children's Summit in Germany

The subgroup received an oral report from three young people representatives who had attended the European Children's Summit in Germany. The Summit took place in April 2009 with young delegates from the Czech Republic, Romania, France, Great Britain, Poland, Austria and Germany.

Young people attended workshops on different topics where they exchanged ideas and wishes with delegates from the other countries. The results were summarised in demands and self-commitments in a contract. The Future Treaty, which committed to change on a number of issues including engagement of young people, racial tolerance and the environment was signed by all delegates.

The subgroup asked questions about the format of the conference and how the young people communicated with each other. The young representatives gave a detailed account of the conference and the opportunities to see different parts of the country. Overall, they enjoyed the experience and made a number of new friends from around Europe. They were surprised at the different perceptions of the same issues from other countries and used the perception of gypsy travellers as an example.

Members discussed the different areas of the treaty where young people had made a series of voluntary commitments and demands of politicians. Firstly, they discussed racism and sought the views of the young people on how they perceived the problem in Manchester. The young people representatives commented that they thought that there was not enough mixing between racial groups in their communities. One of the demands in the Treaty asked politicians to go into schools to talk about racism issues and one of the young people suggested the development of "a lesson in racism" which would involve role playing workshops in schools to bring people from different communities together to work through any issues. This was a practice that had been adopted and been successful in other countries.

The subgroup discussed the demands and commitments around drugs and alcohol. The young people representatives felt that it was important that consistent and clear information was easily available to help them to make an informed choice about drugs and alcohol. They suggested that information could be provided in schools and youth clubs about the consequences of alcohol and drug taking as well as clear information about punishments of taking illegal substances. Members discussed the benefits in involving parents in drug lessons with children. The young people representatives felt that this was a positive step but not in all cases.

In discussion of the "Engagement" section of the Treaty, the subgroup noted the demand for a youth council in every city. Members asked the young people representatives how they wanted staff in schools to be encouraged to support school councils. The young people representatives expressed the importance of young people being seen as equal by staff and school governors. .

The Deputy Principal Youth Officer informed the subgroup that a future Summit was due to be held in 2011. A number of actions had been picked up and the Director of Children's Services was committed to implementing as many of the demands as possible.

Decision:

1. To congratulate and thank the young people representatives from Manchester on the Future Treaty.
2. To recognise and support the commitments and demands of young people, set out in the Future Treaty.
3. To recommend that Chief Officers at the Council are made aware of the Treaty and that they investigate ways of how the demands can be implemented.
4. To recommend that Education services look at developing "a lesson in racism" which would involve role playing workshops in schools to bring people from different communities together to work through any issues, with a view to rolling this out across Manchester.

ESG/09/17 Children and Young People's Plan Update

The Deputy Principal Youth Officer informed the Subgroup that the final consultation draft of the Children and Young People's Plan 2009/12 had been published. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider the Plan in December.

Decision:

To note the report

ESG/09/18 February Meeting of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The subgroup discussed the arrangements for the February meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting would be taking place at 5:30pm on Tuesday 2 February in the Town Hall, replacing the morning meeting of the Committee. The theme of the meeting would be 'Perception of Young People in the Media'. Members of the press would be invited to attend and take part in a panel discussion. The event would be used to showcase and celebrate the achievements of the young people in Manchester.

Decision:

To note the report

ESG/09/19 Next Meeting

The Subgroup agreed to meet again in February to look at the following business:

- Update on the progress of the Youth Council/Central Youth Forum
- Update on progress of shadowing arrangements for Councillors.
- Update on the implementation of the Future Treaty.
- Follow up from the February CYPOS Engagement meeting.